

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

8-2017

Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth with Disabilities

Lauren E. Wright
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wright, Lauren E., "Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth with Disabilities" (2017). *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 6046.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/6046>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



Summer 2017

Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth with Disabilities

Lauren E. Wright
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wright, Lauren E., "Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth with Disabilities" (2017). *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 6046.
<http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/6046>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact dylan.burns@usu.edu.



EFFECTS OF PARENT TRAINING ON INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND
CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS REGARDING TRANSITION TO
ADULTHOOD FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL
YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

by

Lauren E. Wright

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Special Education

Approved:

Robert L. Morgan, Ph.D.
Major Professor

Timothy Riesen, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Kimberly H. Snow, M.Ed.
Committee Member

Mark R. McLellan, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research and
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2017

Copyright © Lauren E. Wright 2017

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions
Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth
with Disabilities

by

Lauren E. Wright, Master of Science

Utah State University

Major Professor: Robert L. Morgan, Ph.D.
Department: Special Education and Rehabilitation

Parents of children with severe/moderate disabilities experience uncertainty and a lack of knowledge as their children go through the transition to adulthood. Research has shown parents play a key role in their child's postschool outcome success and that parent training and beginning transition preparation early are key predictors. This study examined the effects of parent training on parents' knowledge, expectations, and action towards their child's transition to adulthood. Participants consisted of parents of middle school youth with severe/moderate disabilities. The study measured parent knowledge, expectations, and actions. Procedures involved (a) a pretest administered to parents on their transition knowledge, (b) a training session highlighting successful examples of similar individuals with disabilities in the transition process, information on transition services, and action goals that participants can begin working on now; and (c) a posttest

on parent knowledge and expectations. The mean scores on parent expectations and knowledge increased from the pretest to posttest. Additionally, parents were given an assignment to be completed after the training session as a measure of their action to assist their child towards transition. The researcher contacted participants 2 weeks following training to determine if the assignment was completed. Seventy-one percent of participants indicated they worked on their assignment during the 2-week follow-up phone call. Based on these results, parent training in this study was associated with increased parent expectations, knowledge, and actions.

(44 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Effects of Parent Training on Increased Knowledge and Changes in Perceptions Regarding Transition to Adulthood for Middle School Youth with Disabilities

Lauren E. Wright

Preparing a child for life after school can be a daunting task for any parent, and can be especially overwhelming for parents of children with severe/moderate disabilities. Often there is an uncertainty of what is available and possible for their child and where to begin in the planning process. Research has shown that parent involvement, beginning planning early, and parent trainings are key predictors for postschool outcome success. This study examined the effects of providing a parent training to parents with children with severe/moderate disabilities at the middle school level. The study measured parent expectations, knowledge, and actions. Participants took a pretest and then received a training provided by the researcher. The training involved showing participants successful examples of people with disabilities in employment, independent living, and postsecondary education. It also provided participants with information on how to start planning and preparing their child for postschool life and transition resources available to them. After the training, participants took a posttest and wrote down a goal related to preparing for transition. The mean scores from the pretests and posttests showed an increase in parent expectations and knowledge. The researcher also called participants 2 weeks following the training to see if they had worked on their chosen goal. The results

showed that 71% of participants had demonstrated evidence that they had worked on their goal. Based on these results, parent training in this study was associated with increased parent expectations, knowledge, and actions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Morgan of the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation at Utah State University. Dr. Morgan was always kind, patient, and helpful whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Kimberly Snow and Timothy Reisen. They provided valuable support and feedback throughout this process. I am gratefully indebted to all three mentors and would not have successfully completed this thesis without their guidance and input.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my parents for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study, research, and writing. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Lauren E. Wright

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-------------------------------|------|
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| PUBLIC ABSTRACT | v |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ix |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| II. LITERATURE REVIEW | 4 |
| III. METHOD | 10 |
| Participants and Setting..... | 10 |
| Dependent Variables | 10 |
| Response Measurement | 11 |
| Interscorer Agreement | 13 |
| Treatment Integrity | 14 |
| Experimental Design..... | 14 |
| Procedures..... | 14 |
| Data Analysis | 19 |
| IV. RESULTS | 20 |
| V. DISCUSSION | 25 |
| REFERENCES | 28 |
| APPENDICES | 30 |
| Appendix A: Pretest..... | 31 |
| Appendix B: Posttest | 33 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. Mean scores from the pretest and posttest on parent expectations | 20 |
| 2. Mean scores from the pretest and posttest on parent knowledge..... | 22 |
| 3. Percentage data on responses from the 2-week follow up with participants on their self-reflection of working on their chosen assignment goal..... | 23 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities face disadvantages in the workplace because of skill limitations, lack of opportunities to learn, and/or lack of understanding of employers (Wehman, 2011). Historically, the general consensus was that individuals with significant intellectual disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy, and major sensory and physical disabilities were incapable of performing work in the real world (Brown & Kessler, 2014). During the past 11 years, integrated employment placements for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving day supports from state agencies declined 6.2%; only 18.6% of this population was working in integrated employment in 2015 (Butterworth, Hiersteiner, Engler, Bershadsky, & Bradley, 2015). In the 1980s, multiple studies documented the decline in integrated employment placements (Cimera, Burgess, & Bedesem, 2014; Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985). Other data show that the majority of working-age adults with significant disabilities were supported in segregated programs that foster long-term dependency (Niemic, Lavin, & Owens, 2009). According to various studies, employment in a sheltered setting for individuals with disabilities made it highly unlikely that they would “graduate” and move to a more inclusive, competitive employment setting (Siperstein, Parker, & Drascher, 2013).

The overreliance on segregated services led to policy changes in the 1990s, specifically the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1997). Congress intended the reauthorization of the IDEA to improve vocational outcomes for people with disabilities. The 1997

reauthorization of IDEA, however, had no effect as unemployment rates for students with disabilities continued between 70-80% and unemployment rates remained at 90% for students with more significant disabilities (Brown & Kessler, 2014; Brown, Shiraga, & Kessler, 2006; Cimeria et al., 2014; Siperstein et al., 2015). In addition, individuals with disabilities who are employed part-time are paid a lower wage than their nondisabled counterparts (Siperstein et al., 2015). Studies show a clear disconnect between policy, philosophy, and outcomes.

Researchers have shown several factors that contribute to success in postschool outcomes: (a) paid employment experiences prior to exiting school (Carter et al., 2010; Cimeria, 2012; Connors, Curtis, Wall Emerson, & Dormitorio, 2014; Simonsen, Luecking, & Fabian, 2015; White & Weiner, 2004); (b) community-based on-the-job training (White & Weiner, 2004); (c) integration with peers without disabilities (Brown et al., 2014; White & Weiner, 2004); (d) staff training (Kiernan, Hoff, Freeze, & Mank, 2011); (e) interagency collaboration (Brown & Kessler, 2014; Niemiec et al., 2009); (f) parent involvement (Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson, & Zane, 2007); and (g) beginning transition services early (Cimeria et al., 2014).

If research is to inform practice, special education teachers and school administrators need to focus on strategies associated with successful postschool outcomes. We might infer that if schools implemented certain activities, such as parent training, their graduates may experience improved outcomes.

Two practices that could be combined and controlled by practitioners are parent training and beginning early with transition services. Test et al. (2009) found that parent

training was a predictor of successful postschool outcomes. Researchers have recommended transition activities be implemented at the middle school/junior high level (Nielsen, 2013; Weidenthal & Kochhar-Bryant, 2007). Getting parents trained and involved in their child's transition, especially if started at an early age, may strengthen children's transition from school to adulthood, although longitudinal research over several years would be required to establish a relationship. A need exists to explore the prospect of parent training early in the transition period, perhaps as early as ages 12 to 14 years, rather than the required start at 16 years.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

I used Academic Search Premiere and Google Scholar and found 210 articles using the terms: *parent perceptions, transition, students with disabilities, parents, transition to adulthood, parent training, and starting early*. I narrowed the articles from the search results based on a similar match in participants (students with I/DD) and a focus on postschool outcomes. I selected three articles that featured the three main points of my research study.

According to Cimera et al. (2014), initiating transition services early increases successful postschool outcomes. Researchers sought answers to questions related to (a) whether young adults with intellectual disabilities in early transition states were more successful, (b) whether early transition services cost more or less for vocational rehabilitation, and (c) whether early transition services led to better vocational outcomes. The study focused on two groups of young adults with intellectual disabilities. One group consisted of 7,520 participants who resided in states that initiated transition services at age 14 years. The other group consisted of 7,520 participants who resided in states that initiated transition services at age 16 years. Participants in both groups were matched based on exact matches in the following variables: age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, severity of disability, and primary and secondary disabilities. The study utilized information provided by the respective Departments of Education in 24 states; 13 states from the “early transition states” and 11 states from the “later transition states.” The authors found that early transition services yielded a 74.3% employment rate

compared to a 57.8% rate for the latter transition group. The cost of vocational rehabilitation services was comparable for both groups. No significant differences existed between the two groups when comparing wages earned or hours worked. Employment for people with disabilities was an indicator of success in postschool outcomes and a primary goal for special education programs. Thus, the early transition group's 74.3% employment rate exceeded the latter transition group's 57.8% employment rate. Cimera et al. suggested that by providing transition services by the age of 14 years, students with disabilities obtain higher employment rates.

Lindstrom et al. (2007) examined the effects of the family structure and process on postschool employment outcomes for young adults with learning disabilities. The authors analyzed the relationships between the family structure and process variables to determine what variables lead to more successful outcomes for students with disabilities. Family structure variables include the parents' education, occupation, and socioeconomic status. Family process variables include family relationships, parental aspirations, parenting styles, family support, and advocacy. The authors used a multiple-method, multiple-case study design. They conducted interviews with thirteen families and individuals with learning disabilities. The independent variable was the interview and components of the family process. The dependent variable was the postschool outcomes of the young adults with learning disabilities. The young adults with learning disabilities had been through at least 1 year of a transition program, had exited from high school, and were employed at some point during the first 3 to 5 years after high school.

Researchers analyzed the parent interviews and characterized the parents as either

advocate, *protector*, or *removed* in terms of their roles with their young adults in transition. Participants characterized in the *advocate* category had positive family relationships, high levels of involvement, high levels of support and advocacy, limited career aspirations, and provided high levels of intentional career activities. The children of the advocate group transitioned into independent living situations and were working at higher wage and/or higher skill jobs. An important characteristic of the advocate group was that parents were more flexible and more likely and willing to allow their child to take risks in gaining their independence. The *protector* group had positive relationships, high levels of structured and controlling involvement, limited support and advocacy and no intentional career activities. The protector group manifested the lowest success levels in postschool outcomes. The authors suggested that the combination of setting limits on independence with controlling rules and a lack of intentional career planning resulted in the lowest result. Parents in the *removed* category had varied levels of family relationships, but often, negative, low levels of involvement, support and advocacy, career aspirations, and no intentional career activities. Despite a lack of parent involvement, the young adults in this category had positive postschool outcomes. A possible explanation for their success was the presence of high school transition specialists that provided support, advocacy, and intentional career-related activities.

A significant difference between the advocate, protector, and removed characterization groups was the high level of intentional career activities in the parent advocates group and the complete lack of activities in the other groups. Consequently, providing career activities for parents may generate an increase in career aspirations. In

addition, the researchers found a correlation between setting high expectations of independence and successful transition outcomes.

Based on their findings, Lindstrom et al. (2007) recommended that families foster high career aspirations while providing more intentional career-related activities for their children with intellectual disabilities to positively impact postschool employment outcomes. The authors also suggested offering parent training nights to help expand parental career aspirations and to create specific opportunities for engaging parents in the transition process.

Based on the finding that parent involvement is a high indicator of success for postschool outcomes, Young, Morgan, Callow-Heusser, and Lindstrom (2016) studied the effects of parent training programs to increase parent knowledge and involvement. Twenty-nine parents with a child who was receiving special education services from a school district and was between 15 and 18 years of age participated in the study. The researcher randomly assigned the parents to the Brochure Only or Brochure Plus training groups. The Brochure-Only group was provided a brochure about local transition services and a 60-min review of the brochure. Before the review session, participants took a pretest on their transition services knowledge. After the review, participants took a posttest on their knowledge of transition services. The Brochure Plus training group also received the brochure but received 60 min of training for each service together with a question and answer segment. These parents also took the posttest. The groups' participants were invited to contact one transition service or community agency within 30 days. Participants received instructions that they would be contacted to determine

whether they contacted a transition service or community agency. Young et al. found that post-test scores for the Brochure-Only group averaged 3.00 out of 10. The Brochure-Plus group averaged 7.31 out of 10. The authors concluded that the changes in parent knowledge were most likely related to the training provided. None of the participants in the Brochure-Only group contacted a school service or community agency. In contrast, nine of the 14 parents (64%) in the Brochure-Plus group contacted one of the services identified in the brochure. The training correlated with an active response by the parents with the information they received.

These studies indicate that beginning transition services early (Cimera et al., 2014), involving parents (Lindstrom et al., 2007), and providing parent training (Young et al., 2016) increase variables of successful postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. My study will expand on the variables of beginning transition services early and parent involvement by investigating the effects of parent training. I propose to provide a transition training session to parents with children with severe and moderate cognitive disabilities to investigate its effects on expectations, knowledge, and action of the postschool outcomes for their children. I will address the following questions: given parents of middle school students with severe and moderate cognitive disabilities, (a) “What effect will a 90-min training on transition and employment have on parent attitudes and expectations as measured by scores on a pretest and posttest;” (b) “What effect will a 90-min training on transition and employment have on parent knowledge as measured by scores on a pretest and posttest;” and (c) “What effect will a 90-min training on transition and employment have on parent actions towards a chosen goal to prepare

their child for transition?” This research is necessary because although studies have shown the importance of these factors, few, if any, have shown ways to increase parent involvement early in the transition process.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants and Setting

In this study, nine parents/guardians of students in special education classrooms in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades participated. The students were identified as having a significant disability by the school district. The participants were parents of students from one school district in Northern Utah. Participants were between the ages of 36-55 years and consisted of five females and four males.

The researcher sent a flyer with information regarding the training to all parents/guardians of students in her classroom. Parents/guardians were asked to respond to the researcher through email or a phone call if they wanted to participate in the training. After the flyer was sent home, the researcher followed up with a phone call inviting each parent to attend the training. The training session took place in a classroom at one of the middle schools in the district. The classroom included a projection screen, projector, and computer access. Desks and tables were used to allow participants to complete informed consent forms, pretests, and posttests. Desks were arranged to face towards a whiteboard with a screen and projector.

Dependent Variables

Parent Expectations

Expectations were defined as the parent's description of their child's future goals

in regards to employment, independent living, and postsecondary education. Changes in expectations were measured by a comparison of differences in scores on the pretest and posttest.

Parent Knowledge

Knowledge was defined as the parent's understanding of the transition process and available resources. Changes in knowledge were measured by differences in scores on the pretest and posttest.

Parent Action

Action was defined as the parent acting on a goal to help their child with a pretransition skill based on the information from the training. This variable was measured by parent responses to questions in a follow-up phone call from the researcher 2 weeks following training.

Response Measurement

To measure parent expectations, the researcher administered a pretest before the training began. The pretest contained the following questions: (a) "what do you think is the likelihood your child will be employed in a full or part time, minimum wage job at some point in the future;" (b) "what do you think is the likelihood your child will be able to live outside the parent's home at some point in the future;" and (c) "what do you think is the likelihood your child will attend postsecondary education at some point in the future." The participant used a 5-point rating scale to indicate either *highly unlikely*,

unlikely, maybe, likely, or highly likely to answer the question. After the training session was conducted, the researcher administered a posttest with the same questions as the pretest, but in a different order. The posttest also included the question: “How confident are you in your ability to help your child be successful in the transition process?” The participants circled *less confident, the same, or more confident*.

The researcher assigned a numerical value to each rated response. For example, highly unlikely was 1 point, unlikely was 2 points, and so on. The mean score for both the pretest and posttest from all participants was calculated by totaling the points from the responses and dividing by the total number of participants. The researcher used the mean scores to measure the training’s effect on parent expectations.

To measure parent knowledge, the researcher followed the same procedures in the parent expectations explanation above of administering a pretest and posttest. The questions on the test pertaining to parent knowledge included (a) “list three transition resources;” (b) “at what age can your child become eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services;” (c) “name two research-based predictors of success in postschool outcomes;” (d) “what are two important guideposts for setting expectations;” (e) “identify a strategy to teach transition skills to your child;” and (f) “name two pretransition skills.” One point was given for each correct answer. For questions with multiple answers, one point was given for each correct answer given. A mean score from the pretest and posttest was calculated by totaling the points correct from all participants and dividing by the total possible points. The researcher analyzed the mean scores to determine the training’s effect on parent knowledge.

In order to measure parent action, the researcher provided the participants a choice of 10 potential assignments, or goals. Goal choices included (a) using public transportation independently, (b) making purchases at a store independently, (c) cooks a simple meal independently, (d) uses a personal budget and savings, (e) daily grooming and hygiene, (f) solving problems independently, (g) following multiple step directions, (h) cleaning, (i) follow schedule, and (j) appropriately introduces oneself. On the posttest, the participants noted one of the specific goals to begin working on with their child. The researcher called or emailed each participant 2 weeks after the training to follow up and inquire about the goal. If participants responded that they have not worked on the goal, the researcher recorded “no action.” If participants indicated that they have worked on the goal, but could not answer the follow-up questions (“What did you do?” “What progress was made?”), their response was marked as “no evidence.” If participants answer yes and are able to answer the follow-up questions, the researcher marked the answer as “action.” The researcher calculated the total number for each of the three responses and divided the number by the total number of participants in order to yield a percentage. The researcher analyzed the responses and percentages in order to determine the effect of the training in regards to parent action.

Interscorer Agreement

Interscorer Agreement (ISA) data were collected on at least 50% of the pretest and posttest scores. ISA was calculated by dividing the total score obtained by the student researcher by the total score obtained by the major professor and multiplying that score

by 100%. Data collectors were given the same test key. ISA data yielded 100% agreement on scoring pretests and posttests.

Treatment Integrity

An observer (the major professor or committee member) recorded data on the implementation of training procedures. A checklist of training topics and information was developed to determine the percentage of treatment integrity. The data yielded 100% treatment integrity.

Experimental Design

A pre-posttest design with no control (Martella, Nelson, Morgan, & Marchand-Martella, 2013) was used to evaluate the effects of the training on parent's expectations and knowledge. A follow-up component was implemented 2 weeks after the training to determine if participants acted on their specific goal.

Procedures

Pretest

Prior to training, participants completed the pretest measuring their expectations and knowledge of their child's transition process (see Appendix A).

Training

The researcher showed specific case study examples of people with severe disabilities in successful postschool outcomes in regards to employment, independent

living, and postsecondary education. For the employment examples, the Committee Chairperson shared examples with the researcher of two individuals with severe disabilities who are successfully employed in jobs that matched their interests. The researcher showed a segment of a video found online with the help of a committee member that demonstrated examples of independent living from the perspective of the person with a disability and their parent. The Committee Chairperson provided information to the researcher about a young lady who graduated from the Aggies Elevated college program to share in the training for a successful example of postsecondary education. The training also included information from an interview of parents of children with severe disabilities who have recently been through the transition process and experienced positive postschool outcomes. There were personal acquaintances of the researcher.

Current research (Cimera et al., 2014) on the value of starting the transition process earlier was shared with participants. The researcher also explained to participants that Utah recently changed the law to begin transition planning at the age of 14 instead of 16. The researcher assured participants that it was okay if they had not thought about it yet, but discussed the benefits of starting to plan early.

Research on being an advocate parent was shared with the participants and the researcher explained the importance of setting high expectations and intentionally working on pretransition skills. The researcher asked participants to participate in an experiential exercise by reflecting on what happened in a time in their own life when they failed to meet an expectation. Participants reflected on how they responded and the

outcome of their perceived failure. The researcher then shared with parents how setting high and achievable expectations for their child will help their child to be more successful. The researcher then asked participants to identify their child's strengths, weaknesses, and interests and explained the importance of focusing on their child's strengths. The researcher explained the importance of finding a job for their child that fit both their strengths and their interests.

The training then included how to reach their high expectations by intentionally setting goals and providing community based instruction. First, the researcher shared some soft skills that will help their child be more successful in all postschool outcomes. The researcher specifically discussed communication skills, interpersonal skills, personal responsibility, initiative, self-management, and perseverance. The researcher provided participants with specific examples of how they could work on these soft skills with their child. For example, if their child had a difficult time with communication skills, they could record their child talking and replay it back for them and give them feedback; define vocabulary words throughout the day; use a 5-point scale to teach appropriate speaking volume or standing distance; and practice good eye contact. Similar specific examples were shared for each of the discussed soft skills.

The researcher provided a list of possible pretransition goals and asked participants to pick one to focus on to teach their child. The goals included independently using public transportation, purchasing items, cooking, budgeting, grooming, problem solving, following directions, cleaning, following a schedule, and introducing self. The researcher gave examples of teaching strategies, such as (a) creating a task analysis; (b) I

do, we do, you do; and (c) fading prompts. To explain the task analysis, the researcher showed an example of a task analysis for brushing your teeth and discussed with participants why breaking down a task into smaller steps would be helpful. Participants were given time to task analyze their own goal and ask questions if needed. The researcher then shared an example of using the teaching strategy of I do, we do, you do. The researcher explained to participants that if the goal was to sort laundry, then you would demonstrate for your child how to sort the clothes and verbally explain what you are doing while you are sorting. Then you would pick up the clothes and do it with your child, followed immediately by your child sorting the laundry on their own. The researcher shared a cartoon to exemplify how children can become prompt dependent. The researcher then shared an example of how to fade prompts while using public transportation. At the beginning you would need to say, “before we get on we need to scan our card.” Then you would fade your prompt to, “what do we need to do before we get on?” Finally, you would fade out the prompt completely so the child would scan their card before getting on the train or bus without any prompt.

The researcher continued the training by sharing information on transition services and resources; specifically, DSPD, Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA Youth Services, Utah Independent Living Center, Utah Center for Assistive Technology, and the Utah Parent Center. Participants asked specific questions about the services and resources and the researcher encouraged participants to apply and get on waiting lists. The researcher then shared research on successful postschool outcome predictors (Test et al., 2009) such as job and volunteer opportunities before graduating the school system. Paid

employment experiences, community based on-the-job training, integration with peers without disabilities, interagency collaboration, parent involvement and setting high expectations, self-care and independent living skills, social skills, and beginning services early were all explained as successful predictors and thus areas of focus while planning and preparing for transition.

At the end of the training, participants were given time to ask questions. Participants were also given a binder that contained notes and resources that aligned with the training. There was a section that contained visual cooking recipes and daily living skills task analyses. Another section had notes on the specific strategies participants could implement at home to help their child with soft skills. The binder also contained a short summary of each transition resource, information on eligibility, and how and when to apply.

Duration of the training session was 1 hr 20 min. That is, completing the informed consent form took 15 min, the pretest 5 min, training session 50 min, action goal 5 min, and posttest 5 min.

Posttest

The researcher administered the posttest immediately following the training session (see Appendix B).

Parent action follow-up

The researcher explained that she would be calling, texting, or emailing participants in 2 weeks to follow up on their progress on their chosen goal. The

researcher called, texted, and/or emailed parents and asked, “Have you worked on [specific goal identified by parent] with your child?” If the participant reported that they had not worked on the goal, the researcher encouraged participants to continue trying. If the participant responded yes, the researcher asked follow-up questions such as “What did you do?” and “Tell me how it went.” Parent responses to action questions were categorized by the researcher as “no action,” “no evidence,” or “action evidenced.”

Data Analysis

The researcher calculated difference scores by subtracting pretest scores from post test scores. Means and standard deviations were computed for parent expectations, knowledge, and actions. The data from the 2-week follow-up were analyzed to determine the training’s effect on parent action and expressed as the percent of participants whose reports are categorized as “no action,” “no evidence,” and “action evidenced.”

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Figure 1 displays the mean scores from the pretest and the posttest for parent expectations. The pretest mean rating score was 3.2 (on a 5-point scale) indicating most participants rated their expectations for their student as “unsure” regarding successful postschool outcomes. Specifically, mean scores showed expectations for employment were “likely” (4), independent living “unsure” (3), and post-secondary education “unlikely”/“unsure” (2.7). The posttest mean score was 3.7 indicating a rating of “likely” in regards to their students’ postschool success. The mean scores showed expectations for employment were “likely” (4.2), independent living “likely” (3.7), and postsecondary

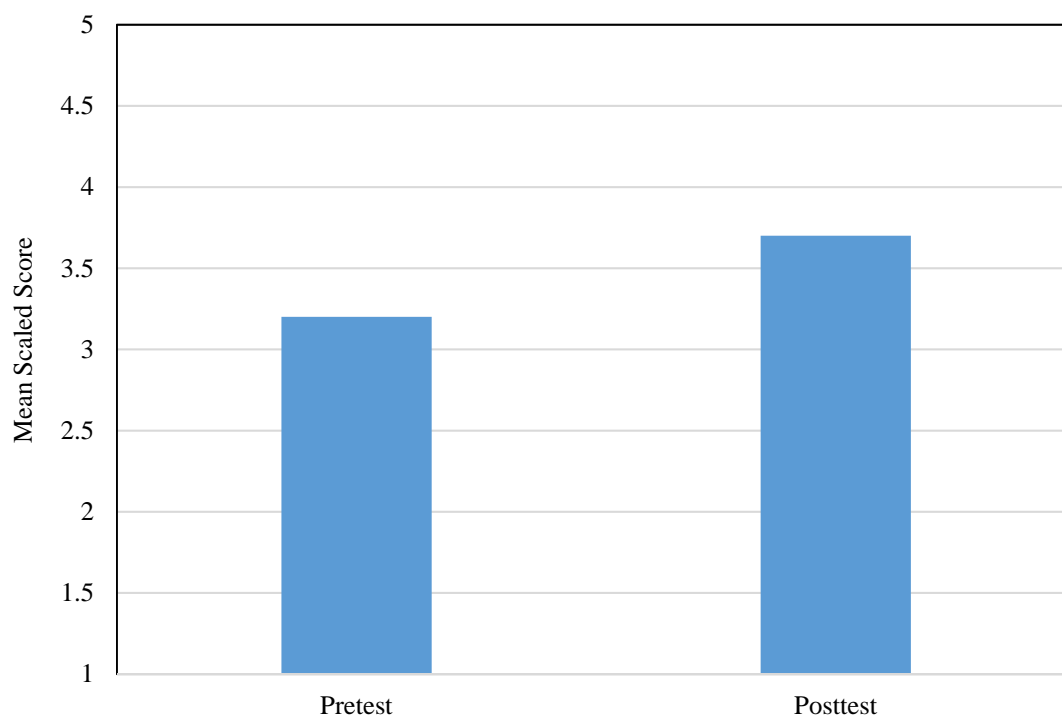


Figure 1. Mean scores from the pretest and posttest on parent expectations.

scale compared to mean pretest scores. In each of the three areas (employment, education “unsure” (3.4). Mean posttest scores increased by 0.5 on the 5-point rating independent living, and postsecondary education), posttest scores were higher than pretest scores. Eight of the nine parents indicated that they felt “more confident” to help their child be successful in the transition process after receiving the training. One parent indicated on this question, “I am concerned because of all his extensive medical needs in addition to cognitive. I hope I can do it and am willing to try.” The parent discussed with the researcher after the training about how their child had multiple health concerns which had been life threatening many times. Their focus has been on just keeping him alive and so it was difficult to be looking so far into the future and to plan, but that she was going to talk with her husband and start figuring out how they could incorporate some of the preparation strategies discussed in the training into their routine at home.

Figure 2 displays the mean scores from the pretest and posttest for parent knowledge. The mean pretest score was 0.56 on the parent knowledge. The score indicates that on average, participants were unable to correctly answer any of the 11 questions concerning knowledge on transition resources and predictors for success. The mean posttest score was 6.1. Seven of the participants were not able to answer any of the knowledge questions correctly on the pretest. One participant received one point for listing family support as one of the predictors for success. One participant received four points on the pretest for listing two transition resources and two research based predictors for success. All nine participants were able to list at least one transition resource on the posttest. Seven of the participants were able to identify the correct age when pre-

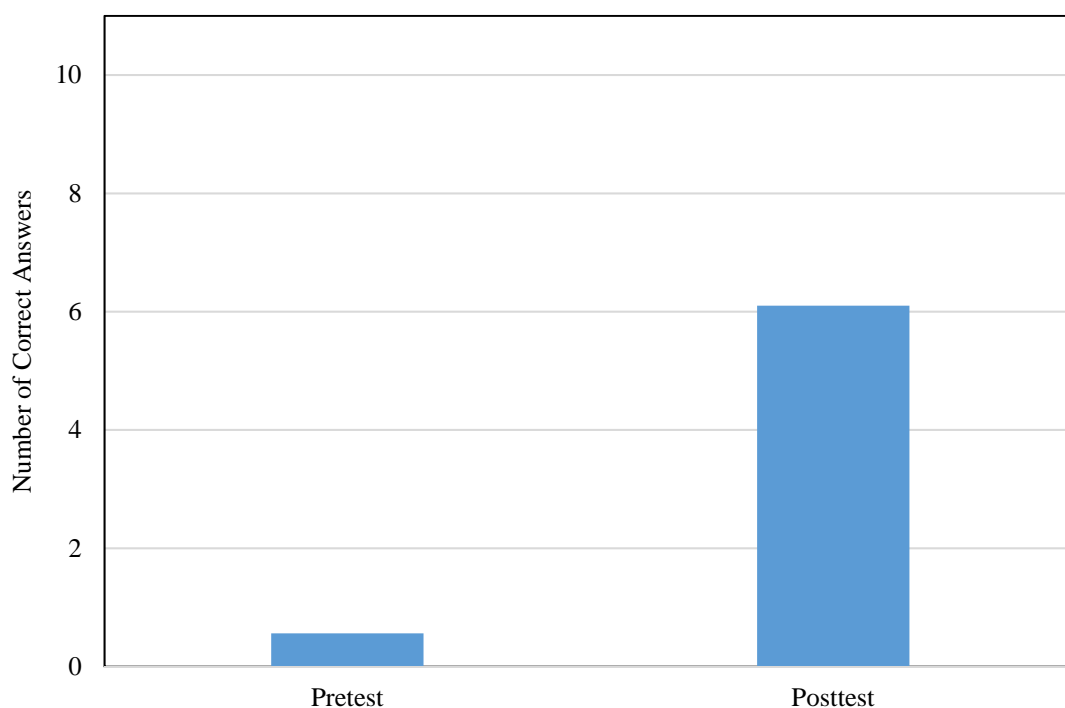


Figure 2. Mean scores from the pretest and posttest on parent knowledge.

employment transition services could begin and research-based predictors of success in postschool outcomes on the posttest. Three to four of the participants were able to answer the guideposts for setting expectations, a teaching strategy for transition skills, and naming pretransition skills. Participants included other information that was discussed in the training on the posttest even though it did not directly answer the question. For example, one participant wrote in response to the question about guideposts for setting expectations the need to “be creative, flexible, and use lots of resources.” Another participant answered the same question with “what are their interests, what are their abilities/disabilities.” Both answers were key concepts discussed during the training. Parents made comments to the researcher that they felt they had learned a lot during the

training. Comments have been made about how they had not put much thought into postschool life for their child and that it changed their perspective. One parent commented that it made them feel better that there were other parents with similar questions and concerns to their own. Two of the participants shared with the researcher that they had good conversations and plans with their spouse who was not able to attend about the things they learned and what they could do to better prepare their child. These data demonstrate that the training led to an increase in parent knowledge.

Figure 3 displays data showing whether parents worked on their goals. As shown, 71% of participants indicated that they worked on their chosen goal in the 2-week period following training. Twenty-nine percent of the participants had not started working on their goal yet, but indicated plans to begin. One participant did not write down a goal and

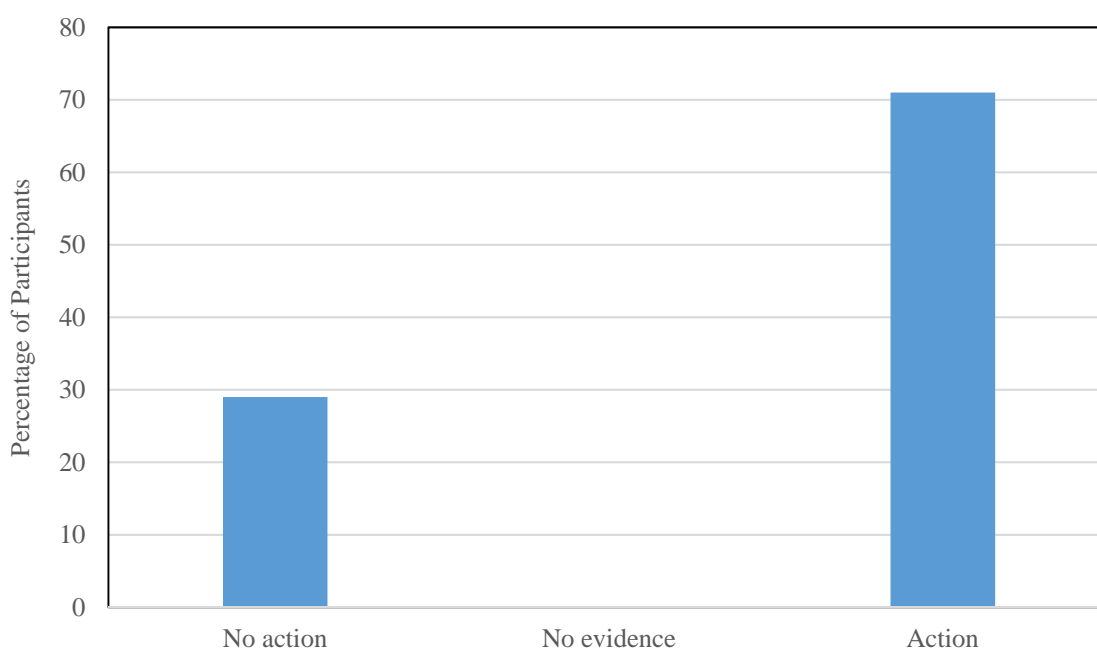


Figure 3. Percentage data on responses from the 2-week follow up with participants on their self-reflection of working on their chosen assignment goal.

another participant combined their goal with their spouse. The researcher did not count these two in the total and therefore based the percentages out of seven participants. During the researcher's discussions with parents, many participants referred to specific concepts discussed during the training. For example, three participants talked about creating a visual task analysis to help their child with their goal. Another participant had come up with some additional goals they wanted to work on with their child in addition to the one they had written down. Although all parents reported that a level of mastery had not been reached on any of the goals, all of them reported some progress. For example, one participant shared that her child had been working on cooking simple meals in the microwave independently and that he was now able to do popcorn and macaroni and cheese on his own. Another parent shared that she and her child worked on the morning routine and using visuals to guide actions. The child still needed several reminders and prompting, but the participant noticed that there was a little less prompting and stubbornness since they started. The two participants that had not yet started working on their goal said that they had been busier than usual, but shared a specific plan for starting to work on their goal. One of the participants set a goal to help their child to shower and wash her hair independently using a visual task analysis. Based on these results, the researcher concluded that the training played a role in parent action.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study addressed the effects of parent training on expectations, knowledge, and action in regards to transition from school to adulthood. Given the results, this study demonstrated that training was associated with increased scores on participants' expectations, knowledge, and action. Participants were provided with real life examples of individuals with disabilities similar to those of their child who succeeded in employment, independent living, and postsecondary education. In addition, the training provided information on specific transition services. The researcher provided examples to participants on actions to prepare for transition. The researcher asked participants to pick one goal that they started working on with their child. The majority of participants began working on a goal after the training, showing that the training was associated with parent action.

The researcher's findings support the results from the study done by Young et al. (2016). Both studies showed that training correlated with parent knowledge and action on assigned goals. The feedback the researcher received from participants indicated that they perceived the training to be valuable and the first time most of them had thought of transition topics. This aligns with the data from Cimera et al. (2014) that beginning transition services early is helpful. The training provided participants with the information to begin focusing and working on transition related skills. Lindstrom et al. (2007) found that involving parents in the transition process led to positive postschool outcomes. The training provided simple ways for parents to be more involved in their

child's transition process. The current study aligns well with the previous research and supports the findings that parent training correlates with parent involvement earlier in the transition process.

Although there was an increase in parent expectations from “unsure” to “likely,” the researcher believes a greater increase would have occurred if more time had been spent on explaining the different options in each of the categories. A more in-depth explanation may have been more effective in raising parent expectations.

A limitation of this study may be that the numbers of participants were few and not demographically diverse. Only nine parents participated and all within the Northern Utah region. Logistically for this study, the researcher was only able to provide the training to one district in the Northern Utah region. With a more diverse population, the researcher would be able to apply the results to a wider range of people. The researcher would also be able to obtain more information on whether cultural or linguistic differences played a role in the effectiveness of the training.

Another possible limitation was the absence of a no control group such as the one used in Young et al. (2013). The format of the research and small number of participants in this study made a control group implausible. A control group would have strengthened the correlation between the training and the dependent variables. Future research should be conducted to include a larger and more demographically diverse population.

This study has several implications for transition teachers, especially in the middle school level. This study suggests that providing parent training early in the middle school years could increase parents' expectations, knowledge, and action in regards to

transition for their child. Efforts to involve parents of middle-school age students in concerted training efforts that maintain throughout secondary grades could produce well-informed parents who assist school teams in facilitating transition. Conceivable, well-informed parents may then take on the role of trainer and supporter for other parents. Starting early with parents of middle-school age students and providing ongoing, repeated training sessions may enhance the transition process and limit barriers currently experienced.

REFERENCES

- Brown, L., & Kessler, K. (2014). Generating integrated work sites for individuals with significant intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 40*(2), 85-97. doi:10.3233/JVR-140675
- Brown, L., Shiraga, B., & Kessler, K. (2006). The quest for ordinary lives: The integrated post-school vocational functioning of 50 workers with significant disabilities. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 31*(2), 93-121.
- Butterworth, J., Hiersteiner, D., Engler, J., Bershadsky, J., & Bradley, V. (2015). National Core Indicators©: Data on the current state of employment of adults with IDD and suggestions for policy development. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 42*(3), 209-220. doi:10.3233/JVR-150741
- Carter, E. W., Dutchman, N., Ye, S., Trainor, A. A., Swedeen, B., & Owens, L. (2010). Summer employment and community experiences of transition-age youth with severe disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 76*(2), 194-212.
- Cimera, R. E. (2012). The economics of supported employment: What new data tell us. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 37*(2), 109-117.
- Cimera, R. E., Burgess, S., & Bedesem, P. L. (2014). Does providing transition services by age 14 produce better vocational outcomes for students with intellectual disability? *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 39*(1), 47-54. doi:10.1177/1540796914534633
- Connors, E., Curtis, A., Wall Emerson, R., & Dormitorio, B. (2014). Longitudinal analysis of factors associated with successful outcomes for transition-age youths with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 108*(2), 95-106.
- Hasazi, S. B., Gordon, L. R., & Roe, C. A. (1985). Factors associated with the employment status of handicapped youth exiting high school from 1979 to 1983. *Exceptional Children, 51*, 455-469.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, P.L. 105-17, 105th Congress, 1st session.
- Kiernan, W. E., Hoff, D., Freeze, S., & Mank, D. M. (2011). Employment first: A beginning not an end. *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, 49*(4), 300-304. doi:10.1352/1934-9556-49.4.300

- Lindstrom, L., Doren, B., Metheny, J., Johnson, P., & Zane, C. (2007). Transition to employment: Role of the family in career development. *Exceptional Children*, 73(3), 348-366.
- Martella, R. C., Nelson, J. R., Morgan, R. L., & Marchand-Martella, N. E. (2013). *Understanding and interpreting educational research*. New York, ny: Guilford.
- Nielsen, J. (2013). *Starting early: Perceptions of parents and teachers on 6th to 12th grade transition timeline for students with high-incidence disabilities* (Master's thesis). Logan, UT: Utah State University.
- Niemiec, B., Lavin, D., & Owens, L. A. (2009). Establishing a national employment first agenda. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 31(3), 139-144. doi:10.3233/JVR-2009-0483
- Simonsen, M., Luecking, R. G., & Fabian, E. (2015). Employer preferences in hiring youth with disabilities. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 81(1), 9-18.
- Siperstein, G. N., Parker, R. C., & Drascher, M. (2013). National snapshot of adults with intellectual disabilities in the labor force. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 39(3), 157-165. doi:10.3233/JVR-130658
- Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32, 160-181. doi: 10.1177/0885728809346960
- Wehman, P. (2011). *Essentials of transition planning*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Weidenthal, C., & Kochhar-Bryant, C. (2007). An investigation of transition practices for middle school youth. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 30, 147-157.
- White, J., & Weiner, J. S. (2004). Influence of least restrictive environment and community based training on integrated employment outcomes for transitioning students with severe disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 21(3), 149-156.
- Young, J., Morgan, R. L., Callow-Heusser, C. A., & Lindstrom, L. (2016). The effects of parent training on knowledge of transition services for students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 39(2), 79-87.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Pretest

Pretest

1. What do you think is the likelihood your child will be employed in a full or part-time, minimum wage job at some point in the future (given supports such as a job coach, if necessary)?

Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

2. What do you think is the likelihood your child will be able to live outside the parent's home at some point in the future (given supports, if necessary)?

Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

3. What do you think is the likelihood your child will attend post-secondary education (such as community college or a vocational school) at some point in the future?

Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

4. What are 2 important guideposts for setting expectations?
5. At what age can your child receive pre-employment transition services?
6. List 3 transition resources.
7. Name 2 research-based predictors of success in postschool outcomes.
8. Identify a strategy to teach transition skills to your child.
9. Name 2 pretransition skills.

Appendix B

Posttest

Posttest

1. What do you think is the likelihood your child will attend post-secondary education (such as community college or a vocational school) at some point in the future?

Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

2. What do you think is the likelihood your child will be able to live outside the parent's home at some point in the future (given supports, if necessary)?

3. Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

4. What do you think is the likelihood your child will be employed in a full or part-time, minimum wage job at some point in the future (given supports such as a job coach, if necessary)?

5. Highly unlikely Unlikely Unsure Likely Highly likely

6. Identify a strategy to teach transition skills to your child.

7. Name 2 pretransition skills.

8. What are 2 important guideposts for setting expectations?

9. At what age can your child receive Vocational Rehabilitation services?

10. List 3 transition resources.

11. Name 2 research-based predictors of success in postschool outcomes.

12. How confident are you in your ability to help your child be successful in the transition process?

Less confident The same More confident

My goal to help my child with a pretransition skill within the next two weeks is: _____

_____.

Follow-up questions

Did you work on the goal?

What did you do?

What progress was made?